

***Cercyon tristis* (Illiger) (Col.: Hydrophilidae) new to Cheshire**

By searching the highest spring tide drift strand at Burton Marsh, Cheshire Dee estuary (SJ/2975) on 29.iv.1989 I was able to observe an assemblage of beetles of which 745 individuals were identified. Dominant amongst them were *Stenus juno* (Pk.) (32%), *Coccidula rufa* (Hbst.) (16%) and *Ptenidium fuscicorne* Er. (11%).

Lesteva heeri (Fauv.) (4%), often encountered singly, was here in some numbers, but of more particular interest was the discovery of 17 specimens (2%) of *Cercyon tristis* (Ill.), evidently new to Cheshire and more usually in areas inundated by fresh water. On the west coast this helps to fill a distributional gap between Anglesey and the Solway, and no doubt more such discoveries will ensue. The more or less halobiontic nature of the fauna is confirmed by the presence of such species as *Atheta vestita* (Gr.) (7%) and *Ochthebius auriculatus* Rey (1%). Other interesting observations included *Agathidium laevigatum* Er. (0.1%) and *Atheta aterrima* (Gr.) (0.1%). This last on dissection revealed an insect pupa in the lower abdominal cavity, which has been seen by Mssrs A.A. Allen, R. Belshaw and N.P. Wyatt, but which remains an unknown entity.— P.F. WHITEHEAD, Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire.

A small Tortoiseshell “courting” a Peacock butterfly?

Whilst working for hoverflies along a row of blackthorn bushes in full flower at the edge of a grass field at Shooters Hill near here on the very warm afternoon of 30th March, 1990, I witnessed the following curious episode. Two butterflies (species as above) appeared flying closely together and settled on the thick blossom, apparently more for the purpose of basking than of feeding (which they were never seen to do). Now and then they would take a short flight, again almost in contact, only to return to the same spot or another quite near. I could not be sure of their sexes by inspection, but their behaviour seemed to point decidedly to a male *urticae* and a female *io* — an assumption I shall make for convenience.

In the various stations they took up, their relative positions were always the same: *io* above, and *urticae* just below but never quite touching, except that when first seen settled the spread wings of the latter partly covered the former's hindwings. *Io* (somewhat worn) appeared unconcerned throughout, and might almost have been unaware of the other's presence; it was always she who took the initiative in any positional shift or movement, such as a brief flight. Invariably her devoted acolyte (suitor?) followed in constant attendance almost literally at her heels, indulging at least once in a little wing-trembling in the fully-spread pose. (Whether this last is a known courtship phenomenon in *Aglais urticae* I cannot say.)

It might, perhaps, be supposed that this *urticae* was a sentinel or guardian of territory, keeping very strict watch on an interloper — the usual reason for two butterflies of different species flying closely together